

Honors Thesis Guidelines: Global and International Studies

Writing an honors thesis is one of the most rewarding things you will do as an honors student in the Global and International Studies major. Below is a guide to the process. Please review them carefully and feel free to reach out to the honors adviser if you have any questions.

Who may write an honors thesis in Global and International Studies?

If you are a GLIS major, you may write a thesis in GLIS. Please contact the program's Honors Adviser if you have questions.

What is an honors thesis?

The Schreyer Honors College offers good advice about how to choose a topic, find a thesis supervisor, and budget one's time: <https://www.shc.psu.edu/academic/thesis/>. The Honors College describes the thesis as "a scholarly piece of writing in which the writer is expected to show a command of the relevant scholarship in his (or her) field and contribute to the scholarship." "It should confront a question that is unresolved and push towards a resolution."

The thesis is likely to be one of the most challenging and rewarding assignments of your undergraduate career. It is an opportunity to engage in scholarly analysis at an advanced level. In the process of pursuing a topic, conducting independent research, and crafting a sustained argument, you will build on what you have learned in your coursework, gain insights into disciplinary scholarship and methodology, and develop your talents as a writer and thinker. Upon completion of your thesis, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have produced a work of scholarship that will be permanently archived in the Schreyer's (electronic) thesis archive and the Penn State Library system. Here is a [link](#) to recent honors theses submitted and approved in GLIS.

The GLIS Program expects honors theses to be based on thorough research and to offer an original interpretation. You must situate your research within the scholarship of the field and to articulate and support the significance of your project's contribution. The approach of your thesis will vary depending on the topic and your disciplinary framework. Regardless of methodology, remember to center your thesis on *your analysis* of sources and data to make *an interpretative argument*. An honors thesis must have a clear, persuasive, and well-supported thesis. Your thesis supervisor will help you to determine the appropriate balance between primary research, scholarly contextualization, and interpretation.

How do I choose a topic and a thesis supervisor?

GLIS honors theses explore a range of topics from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Ideally, the pathway you choose for the major, the core courses that you take for the major, or your other courses should help you to choose a suitable topic for the time that you submit a thesis proposal, generally one year before your intended graduation. The thesis is an opportunity for you to synthesize and deepen the knowledge that you have gained in your core GLIS classes and your pathways coursework.

To select a topic, identify something that sparks your passion *and* is feasible to pursue with the allocated time and resources. Depending on your postgraduate plans, writing a thesis may be

your last opportunity to pursue an intellectual interest in a formally structured manner. If you plan to pursue graduate study, consider working on a topic that will help to prepare you for further study.

For more advice on the craft of research, including formulating a topic, we recommend that you consult Kate L. Turabian's [*A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*](#) or Wayne C. Booth's [*The Craft of Research*](#).

When choosing a faculty member to serve as your thesis supervisor, consider whose courses you have succeeded in and have enjoyed. Ideally, you should have a good working relationship with your supervisor, who will serve as your key interlocutor throughout the research and writing process. It is also recommended that the thesis supervisor have expertise in the subject matter, geographic regions, and/or methodologies that you intend to study in your research. Thesis supervisors for GLIS students may come from a range of departments and programs, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the major and the diversity of projects that students pursue. If you are unsure about whom to ask to be your supervisor, please consult the GLIS honors advisor.

You will also need the approval of the GLIS honors advisor, who will serve as a second reader of your thesis. If you are writing an interdisciplinary thesis in two majors, you will need a thesis supervisor from one area and honors advisers from both majors to approve your thesis.

How do I write a thesis proposal?

Schreyer Honors College asks you to complete a thesis proposal to identify your thesis supervisor and give a basic outline of the topic your thesis intends to address. The deadlines on the Schreyer website apply for the submission of the thesis proposal. Typically, you must submit a thesis proposal one year before you intend to graduate. The proposal asks you to provide a working title, to describe the purpose/objective and the intended outcome of your project, to explain whether you will earn honors credits or satisfy other requirements with your thesis, and to outline a working plan for your thesis.

What is GLIS 496H and how do I register for it?

GLIS does not have a specific course for thesis writing. To receive credit for writing your thesis, please register for GLIS 496, an independent study. If you need additional honors credits, you may process it as an honors option via the Schreyer portal. You may register for GLIS 496H for one or two semesters, for a maximum of 6 credits, usually during the academic year in which you intend to graduate. Students typically register for GLIS 496H for 3 credits in the semester preceding their final semester, meaning that, if you are on a four-year path to graduation, you would register for GLIS 496H in the fall semester of your senior year. Students may repeat GLIS 496H, registering for 2 or 3 credits during their final semester while completing their final revisions before submission.

You cannot register for GLIS 496 on LionPath, as access to this course is controlled within the department. To register, complete a registration form from the Academic Adviser for GLIS or from the honors advisor. The form requires the signature of your thesis supervisor. Return the signed form to our staff coordinator Becky Cross (rlc21@psu.edu, 814 863-4517, 466 Burrowes Building), who will complete your registration.

What is the procedure and timeline for developing your thesis?

A thesis proposal is due to the Schreyer Honors College a year before you intend to graduate. The proposal outlines the scope of the proposed research and should include a preliminary bibliography. The proposal will have to be approved by the GLIS honors advisor and your thesis supervisor.

You may register for GLIS 496H (3 credits) in the semester preceding your final semester at Penn State. You and your thesis supervisor will then create a calendar of meetings for the independent study. You should aim to submit to your thesis supervisor a complete draft of your thesis by the end of your GLIS 496H semester. This draft will be graded by the thesis supervisor, with the expectation that you will revise and polish the thesis before submitting a final version. Your grade for the independent study will be based on (1) consistent progress on your research and writing; (2) regular communication with your thesis supervisor; and (3) good faith effort to address suggestions made by the thesis supervisor.

You should aim to submit a revised copy of your thesis to your thesis supervisor by the fifth week of the semester in which you intend to graduate, which will allow for one final revision before submission for format review. You must submit a full final draft of the complete thesis to the Schreyer Honors College by early March for format review. You should make sure to follow the most up-to-date formatting and submission guidelines on the Schreyer website.

File the final version of your thesis with the Schreyer Honors College by their formal deadline in early April. At this point, your thesis supervisor and honors advisor will be asked to read and approve your thesis. The final approval signatures are not automatic and are subject to the discretion of the thesis supervisor evaluating your work. You should allow at least a week for the thesis supervisor and the reader(s) to sign your final approval page.

What are the formal expectations for a GLIS honors thesis?

While the length of your thesis and the number of chapters it includes will vary with your specific plan of study, the program recommends that the following guidelines be used by thesis supervisors and thesis writers. An honors thesis in Global and International Studies is typically 50 pages in length, including a brief introduction, three chapters, and a conclusion. Alternate formats are possible, pending discussion with and approval by the thesis supervisor and the honors advisor.

Your thesis should address questions and topics of relevance to global and international studies from a humanistic and/or social scientific perspective. You will determine the research questions, methodology, and sources appropriate for your project in conversation with your thesis supervisor. Your thesis should aim to make an original contribution to the study of global and international studies by recovering little-known primary works, engaging existing cultural works or data sets in a new conceptual framework, or bringing together works or case studies from contexts not often studied together. Students are expected to situate their research question and analysis within a body of existing scholarship, and to clearly articulate the significance of their project and its contribution in that context.

Citations in your thesis must correctly follow a standard format, such as the Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago, or American Psychological Association (APA) Style, as recommended by the thesis supervisor.

Updated on June 2023; contact Krista Brune, Honors Advisor for Global and International Studies, if you have any questions.